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## Introduction

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I BEGAN THINKING ABOUT the subject of this issue a few years ago. As I approached and passed my own midlife and that of my career, I began to feel a certain anxiety that I needed some form of personal or professional renewal. Just prior to my making a change, my coeditor Richard Malinski embarked on a Ph.D. in education. His late career initiative prompted me to seek out a similar channel (but not an exact duplicate) in an online master's degree. We both took directions that at our ages and stages of career would have been unusual in the past. But as we discovered in investigating and researching this area prior to committing to editing this issue, times were changing.

The career stages of librarians were once much clearer than they have become today. The new graduate chose a path (public services, technical services, or later some aspect of systems) and followed it to retirement, middle management, or upper administration. The occasional shift from one area to another occurred, but the librarian who changed from reference to technical services or from academia to public libraries was rare.

This is no longer the trend for many reasons. Two of the major forces bringing about this change in the library world today are technology and aging. Technology has changed the nature of the profession and forced or influenced some to consider leaving it. Those who stay must cope with the speed of technological change and the challenge of acquiring complex skills at an age when learning these new skills is sometimes more difficult or challenging. The aging of the librarian population has been well documented (Wilder, 1999; Arthur, 1998). This phenomenon will drastically reduce the numbers of experienced librarians in the profession in just a few short

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years. In addition, with age has come a certain dissatisfaction and reevaluation of careers and life, especially the work-life balance. This has led to a growing number of midcareer librarians often embarking on very nontraditional paths or even experimenting with boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) with no traditional organizational allegiances or ties. Those who do choose to advance to upper management are few but significant and have begun to approach it in a manner very different from their predecessors. Others, who either do not wish to pursue upper management or who lack the opportunities, have begun opting for new career choices at the midpoint of their careers. These include moving to different sectors of the profession; embarking upon a sabbatical or study leave to reinvigorate themselves; becoming entrepreneurial or self-employed; seeking opportunities outside of the library field; rotating through different jobs at their workplace or within the profession; seeking to assist or mentor the young, those just entering the field, or those changing to unfamiliar sectors; or serving the profession through publishing and service. A strong sense of Erik Erikson's generativity (Lachman, 2001) often compels the midcareer librarian to seek to give back to and to assist the future of librarianship and the new generation of librarians. Through the effects of aging, a growing dissatisfaction with the traditional paths, the need for new challenges, and the belief that a new generation might benefit from their encouragement and nurturing, the midcareer librarian is presented with an altered scenario for the future. This future is one that they may shape for themselves for personal or altruistic reasons. As the contributors to this issue show, the second half of their careers may take a direction that they never expected.

Cathy Matthews approaches the traditional upper-management career path in a decidedly nontraditional manner while looking at the various transitional stages of becoming a chief librarian. Marlis Hubbard looks at the study leave as both a mechanism for professional growth and creativity as well as a means of personal self-renewal. Timothy Johnson details his move to the "major leagues" from a small to a large institution and what challenges and opportunities present themselves at midcareer. Ron Edwards discusses the less-common shift from the world of academia to that of public librarianship. Marilyn Harhai has us step back to examine "how" we make that midcareer decision and what resources we call upon to help us. Brice, Brown, Hickman, and Thorburn discuss one way that the midcareer librarian can give back without changing jobs—mentoring the young or those who have recently moved into librarianship or a new area of it. Their article covers a mentoring programme in the UK that is proving very successful. Candy Start Zemon looks at one librarian's personal decision at midlife to move from a low ebb of productivity to an increasingly challenging one of contribution in the private entrepreneurial sector. Richard Malinski chronicles the initiatives at a Canadian academic library to rejuvenate the

librarians via a periodic job-rotation scheme that allows for risk and personal growth as well as revitalization of the staff. Linda Loos Scarth looks at the phenomenon from the other side as one who decided to *become* a librarian at midcareer. Katherine Dickson outlines the virtues of keeping a work journal at midcareer. Denise L. Montgomery deals with the topic of "plateauing" especially as it applies to the midcareer librarian. Marilyn P. Lewis looks at the nature of technological change in the profession and how to cope with it.

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